

American Competitiveness

We can and must continue to create jobs and generate economic growth in Southwest Washington and throughout the U.S. I have introduced or supported legislation to invest in our domestic infrastructure, strengthen the Buy America Act, create tax incentives designed to promote economic growth, and reward companies that refuse to outsource U.S. jobs. I also have worked to help small businesses access federal grant funding to help develop the innovative technologies that will keep America at the forefront of the global marketplace and create good jobs right here at home.

But American competitiveness is a two-way street. In order for the U.S. to remain competitive in the world market, Americans need to possess the requisite language and technological skills. In the coming years, American productivity will likely be significantly hampered by our limited math, science, and foreign language proficiency skills. In order to reverse this dangerous course, I have introduced legislation to improve math and science training and expand foreign language education.

And as employers continue to face job shortages, we must ensure that we have a trained and skilled workforce to fill these vacancies. I am leading the fight in Congress to ensure that career and technical education programs receive the attention they deserve.

Improving Math & Science Education

Our students must be provided with well-trained math and science teachers and state-of-the-art curriculums to keep pace with today's job markets. As the chairman of the Research and Science Education Subcommittee, Congressman Baird believes we must improve the performance of our young people in science, technology, and mathematical fields.

In 2007, Congressman Baird helped author the America COMPETES Act. This landmark, bipartisan legislation makes substantial improvements to math and science education, including establishing a program at the National Science Foundation to create more qualified teachers in science and math fields, and strengthened the nation's commitment to scientific research. The America COMPETES Act, which was celebrated by educators and businesses, was signed into law in August of 2007.

Increasing Access to Foreign Language Education

The United States is facing a language gap that has the potential to damage our global economic competitiveness. Economically, we must be prepared to tap into emerging global markets like China and India. While millions of Americans study foreign languages, the overwhelming majority of class enrollment is in Spanish, French, or German. Unfortunately, that enrollment balance does not reflect the economic realities of the 21st century.

Congressman Baird believes we must ensure that our children and grandchildren have the tools that they need to remain competitive in the future global economy. The ability to speak the languages of emerging economies will help U.S. businesses and protect American jobs.

Responding to this need, Congressman Baird has introduced the National Foreign Language Coordination Act. This legislation would establish a National Language Director and create a National Foreign Language Coordination Council to develop and oversee the implementation of an American foreign language strategy, including strengthening foreign language education programs and standards.

Congressman Baird has also introduced the Access to Language Education Act. This legislation would create a federally-sponsored video programming channel on the Internet focused on providing foreign language instruction. Instruction would be provided for languages that are not widely taught in educational institutions in the U.S., but that are likely to have significant value for our country in global competitiveness, trade, international relations, national security, and defense.

Improving Small Business Innovation Research

Our economy depends on innovation for continued growth, and research indicates that small businesses tend to be more dynamic and inventive than large corporations. The federal government's Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) program was designed to encourage small businesses to meet these goals and develop innovative technologies.

In 2001, however, the Small Business Administration (SBA) ruled that companies receiving more than 51 percent of their financial backing from venture capitalists were excluded from the SBIR program. After talking with a venture capital-backed small business innovator in his congressional district that was deemed ineligible for SBIR grant funds, Congressman Baird set to work on getting the rule changed. Venture capital-backed small businesses conduct an array of innovative, life-saving research and development programs, and many of these innovative small businesses could not support their costly research without some venture capital funding. Congressman Baird believes the

2001 SBIR ruling conflicts with the original intent of the law; SBIR was established in 1982 to encourage small businesses to explore their technological and commercial potential, and to enable them to compete with larger businesses.

Additionally, Congressman Baird has been working with his colleagues on the Science Committee to improve the SBIR program and address some of the barriers that prevent small businesses from commercializing the technologies that they develop under it. SBIR is the single largest technology development program supported by the federal government, but has received little congressional oversight since its creation.

Congressman Baird supports common sense SBIR reforms that ensure federal research and development investments ultimately stimulate job creation and economic growth. Additionally, Congressman Baird has been working with his colleagues on the Science Committee to improve the SBIR program and address some of the barriers that prevent small businesses from commercializing the technologies that they develop under it. SBIR is the single largest technology development program supported by the federal government, but has received little congressional oversight since its creation. Congressman Baird supports common sense SBIR reforms that ensure federal research and development investments ultimately stimulate job creation and economic growth.

U.S. Department of Commerce

House Committee on Energy and Commerce

Senate
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

House Committee on Small Business

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurialism